

Teresa's Story

By Kathi O'Connor

Choosing the *road less traveled* happened not once but twice for Teresa, recent Caroline Center graduate. Her first introduction to Caroline Center came from a cousin who was an alumna. Teresa has led a difficult life in her young 27 years. From the time she was thirteen, she had most of the responsibility for raising her three sisters. She is now the proud mother of two sons ages 12 and 8 and has also endured the sorrow of miscarriage. She is engaged to be married to a 'great guy' and is looking forward to a new path in her life, but there were many roadblocks in her way.

Teresa has worked hard for many years at a variety of jobs to help support her siblings and her own children. Her experiences include working at Wendy's, working at a gas station as a cashier, and eventually Teresa worked at an assisted living facility where she realized that she really enjoyed caring for the elderly. So when her cousin told her about Caroline Center and the opportunity for training and certification as a Certified/Geriatric Nursing Assistant, Teresa decided to choose this road and enrolled at Caroline Center initially in January, 2010. Teresa struggled with many issues during her first time at Caroline Center. She says, "I had so many sad things happen to me over so many years, I couldn't focus. I really needed to talk to someone about it all. The counseling offered was something new for me and I just had to let things out and take the weight off my mind". Teresa admittedly also struggled with her attitude and her ability to concentrate on her skills training. She completed most of the 15 week program but couldn't get her grades high enough to graduate.

In spite of not being able to graduate with her class, Teresa made two admirable and unusual choices at this fork in the road in her life. First of all, she decided not to give up. Teresa asked if she could come back to Caroline Center for the next session and try again. Secondly, in spite of her overwhelming disappointment at not graduating with her class, Teresa attended their graduation ceremony with a smile on her face and clapped the loudest as her friends' names were announced and they received their certificates.

In April, 2010, Teresa once again enrolled at Caroline Center. This time around, she said, "I had a real motivation to make it. I knew Caroline Center was a good, caring place not just somewhere where you do your time. These people really cared about me-they let me come back and try again. Miss Jan and Sister Agnese treated me like I was one of their own family members". Teresa reflected on her attitude issues in the past and said, "I have really worked on my attitude, it's not perfect, but I am really trying to be more open to others and show that in my face".

Teresa was assigned to Good Samaritan Nursing Center for her clinical internship. During her internship, she called the staff at Caroline Center to say how thrilled she was to be in this professional nursing environment. "I love helping the elderly, and trying to make them happy. Some of them don't even have family so I want to be their family when I am with them she said".

On July 30, Teresa Hicks graduated as a Certified Nursing Assistant. She walked with pride with a new class of friends and gratitude in her heart for all that Caroline Center has done for her.

Teresa wrote a beautiful thank you note as she was leaving Caroline Center. In it she wrote, "Thank you to all the Caroline Center Team for accepting me not once but twice into the program. I love everyone at Caroline Center because you are so wonderful and have shown me such support". Roadblocks and detours in life can sometimes bring with them resolve to choose a *road less traveled*. Sometimes someone can find the strength to shake off disappointment and try again, and still feel happiness for others who are a little bit ahead of you on the road that leads to a new life and fulfillment.